Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.

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Issue No. 4 June 1981

EDITORIAL

We are all delighted that John Fosbery is out of hospital and back home (where Molly is doing her best to keep him in order!) It is great to know that his experience and expertise remain at our service. However, we must face the fact that it was major surgery that John underwent; it would be quite wrong of us to rely on John for everything in the future, as we have rather tended to do in the past. This makes the next Annual General Meeting on Saturday 13th June at the Victory Services Club, Seymour Street, near Marble Arch, the most important meeting in the Club's history. We hope that everyone will make a special effort to be present so that as many members as possible may share in the decisions regarding the Club's future.

There seems to be no reason why the Central American Group should not thrive. We shall need some arrangements to be made for our funding, and this will be one of the issues to be considered at the A.G.M. So far no-one has objected to the suggestion that we should charge a subscription (perhaps £3 per annum) for membership of the special area or country Group of Spanish Main. It is surely inadvisable to rely henceforth on handouts from the Club's central fund, plus occasional commission for sales, whether booklet, private treaty or Group meeting bourses. Apart from any argument there may be that our minipackets detract from the viability of the General Packet of the Club, the fact is that most of the good material we have handled to date has come from John Fosbery himself; when he is no longer able or willing to supply us we may not be able to send out minipackets of any quality. Moreover, the sales on private treaty have so far proved rather disappointing; certainly the commission from these would not keep us 'in business' for long.

Inevitably there was a strong Central American flavour to the excellent Northern Group meeting held on March 14th. Proceeds from the auction will finance this Newsletter and the next Chile one. There were several displays during the course of the day, Paraguay, El Salvador and Nicaragua being but three of the countries represented by fine displays. We are grateful to the Riverside Hotel, and its owner, Mr A. Langsam, for the use of their facilities, arranged through our member, Mike Olivant.

Bernard Davies

Bernard Davies

REMEMBER SPANISH MAIN AUCTION

viewing at 10 a.m. onwards

AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

at NOON

VICTORY SERVICES CLUB, Sat. 13th JUNE

It is our intention to include from time to time, short biographical notes on some of the leading public figures featured in Central American philately. Here is the first of these on NICARAGUAN public men, written by Mike Birks. We should be glad to receive similar articles on leading personalities of other Central American countries; we hope authors will not mind if we hold them until they can be used as space-fillers in our Newsletter.

Agusto Cesar Sandino (1895-1934)

depicted on the set for the first anniversary of the Liberation, 1980.

Guerrilla leader variously called bandit, patriot, hero and villain, considered by some to be the first of the modern guerrilla organizers of a 'people's army'. He was born on May 18th 1895, the son of don Gregorio Sandino, a wealthy man, by Margarita Calderón, a servant girl. Initially he went by the name Agusto Calderón, but later living with his father, began to be Agusto C. Sandino, the 'C' standing for 'Cesar'. He studied in a Granada High School, where he developed his love for the classics, which started in his father's sizeable library.

After leaving school, he worked in his home town of Niquinohomo, and after a time left to work for Vaccaro Brothers and Company (later Standard Fruit) in Honduras, at La Ceiba. He also worked in Guatemala and Tampico, Mexico. Mexican Nationalism appealed to him, and he became possessed by a mysticism and a messianic sense of mission about Latin American nationalism. Returning to Nicaragua in 1926, he worked for the San Albino gold mine in Nuevo Segovia. Here he lectured mine workers on injustice, and discovered his powers of leadership. From Honduras gun-runners, he raised arms to equip a band of 29 men. Failing in an attack on the Jícaro garrison, he led his band to the Caribbean Coast and joined the Constitutionalists under Moncada.

When the peace of Tipitapa was signed, Sandino did not lay down his arms. For the next six years he carried on a guerrilla war which became a classic pattern for such leaders as Castro and Guevara. The principal opponent was the U.S. Marine expeditionary force; a principal tactic, terror; a principal strategy, following his contemporary Mao Tse Tung's dictum of being a 'fish' in the water represented by the common people. His first major engagment was at Ocotal, where a pitched battle with Marines under Captain G.D. Hatfield was fought on July 16th 1927. Among his strongholds was the famous fortified mountain 'El Chipote'. Sandino was in Managua for a peace conference when he was seized and shot on February 21st 1934, allegedly by members of the National Guard. His name lives on in 'Sandinista' movements, one of which was active in Nicaragua in 1969, involving a battle in which tanks were used in Managua's streets. Success however, did not come until 1979, when the then President Anastasio Somoza Debayle fled before the advancing Guerrillas overran the Capital.

Sandino has been the subject of considerable revolutionary literature, including fiction. Carleton Beal's assessment of Sandino in 1965 bears repeating ("The Nation", 1965 'In Quest of Sandino, Imperialism Still Rides'). He is the outstanding popular hero of this country, throughout the Latin American world.

PRIVATE TREATY OFFERS

Much of the material in our last number is still available.

We draw attention especially to two items now offered at REDUCED PRICES, viz.

G5 MINIATURE SHEETS unmounted mint SG1014, 1025, 1026 £5½

G6 GUATEMALA 1930 Postal Memorandum used as f.d.c. Guatemala City to Quezaltenango £15

Mr James Negus, catalogue editor of Stanley Gibbons Ltd., has asked to receive copies of our Newsletters in the hope of incorporating suggestions/alterations/corrections, in future editions of SG's catalogues. Our causerie would therefore, provide a suitable means of bringing your views on the subject to Mr Negus' attention.

The East Coast of Nicaragua and its Postal Services

by Michael P. Birks

Very little seems to have been written about the postal services of the East Coast of Nicaragua, other than an excellent article by our Editor, Bernard Davies, about the overprints of Bluefields and Cabo, which appeared in 'The London Philatelist'. It is my intention therefore, to put down on paper, all I know (or I should say, the little I know) about the region and its postal services. It is my hope that through the Causerie, those with more information than myself will fill the numerous gaps and correct the errors.

I start with the postal agency at Greytown.

The British Postal Agency at Greytown

The 'roots' of the British in Nicaragua, go back over 300 years to the year 1655, when a British Protectorate was declared over the narrow tract of land, known as the Mosquito Coast, after a tribe of indigenous Indians known as the Misquitos. Good relations with these Indians were cemented, when in the reign of Charles I, the Earl of Warwick took the son of the Misquito King on a visit to England. From the formation of an 'alliance' in 1740, to the agreed withdrawal in 1786, the area was counted as a British dependency. Indeed the area can sometimes be seen coloured 'Empire Red' on older maps of the British Empire. Following the withdrawal, at the request of the Spanish, Britain continued to protect the Indians.

The relative calm of Spanish Nicaragua ended in December 1811, when the governing intendent was deposed in a revolution. Four decades of turbulence and confusion followed, during which ties between the British and the Misquitos were once again strengthened. These strengthened ties culminated in the seizure of San Juan del Norte by the Misquitos, aided by the British who renamed it Greytown, in 1848. Four years later, Cornelius Vanderbilt, in response to a demand for quick conveyance to the newly discovered gold fields of California, started carrying passengers by steamship and carriage via Greytown. As a result of the American presence, the British Government nominally gave up its authority over Greytown, leaving James Green the British Consul, looking after Britain's interests.

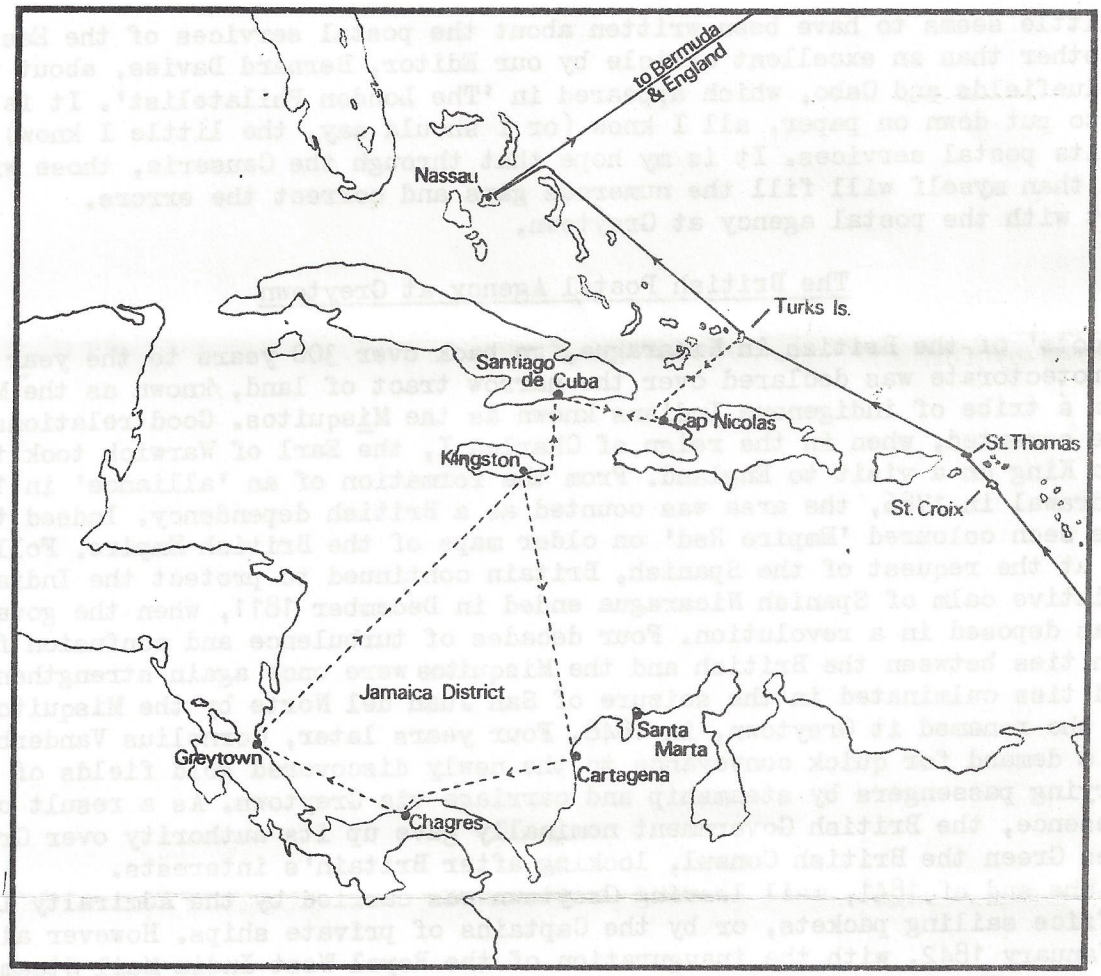
Up to the end of 1841, mail leaving Greytown was carried by the Admiralty in conjunction with Post Office sailing packets, or by the Captains of private ships. However all this changed in January 1842, with the inauguration of the Royal West India Mail Steam Packet Company's routes. The Company, formed by James McQueen, as a result of complaints about poor service from both the Islands of the West Indies and Great Britain, came into being 'proper' on 20th March 1840, when McQueen's proposals were accepted. 14 steamers and 3 schooners were built in various shipyards around Britain, and two steamers were purchased, making an initial fleet of 19 ships, 6 of which were destined to be lost.

Falmouth was still retained as the packet station, and all the steamers both homeward and outward bound were obliged to call there to drop or pick up the mails. The steamships left Southampton at midnight on 1st-2nd and 15th-16th of each month, travelling via Coruna, Madeira, Barbados, St. Vincent, Grenada, St. Croix and St. Thomas arriving at Turks Islands at 2.30 p.m. on the 23rd and 7th or 8th (30 or 31 day month), where the mails for Nicaragua were unloaded. 5 hours later, having taken on board the mails from Nicaragua, the steamer continued to Nassau, Bermuda and on to Southampton via Fayal, (Azores) where it arrived in England on 13th and 27th, a round trip of about six weeks.

The Nicaraguan mails were part of a larger consignment forming what was known as the 'Jamaica District'. These mails left Turks Islands at 7.00 p.m. on the day of arrival, and travelled via Cap Nicolas (Haiti), Santiago de Cuba, Kingston, Cartagena and Chagres to Greytown, where they arrived at 1.00 p.m. 7 days after leaving Turks Islands (30th and 14th or 15th). The steamer continued on its way after a 2 hours stay, via Kingston, Santiago de Cuba and Cap Nicolas to Turks Islands, arriving at 2.00 p.m. on the 8th and 22nd or 23rd.

The scheme was very ambitious, consisting as it did of one major route to the Indies, and ten branch routes around the Islands, of which the Jamaica District was one. It was not possible using the primitive engines of the day, to maintain a regular and reliable service, as only simple repairs could be carried out in the Indies, chiefly at Kingston (Jamaica). Major repairs had to be carried out in England, and one ship, the 'Isis', foundered attempting such a journey. The ships were all wooden-hulled upon the insistence of the Admiralty who exerted considerable control over the Company's operations. Indeed, ships were comandeered and converted for use in the Crimea war. The Admiralty were still unconvinced that iron hulls should be constructed, despite the experience of Nelson, who in 1780, had had to copper clad the bottom of his and other ships to prevent the ravages of marine creatures in these warm waters from seriously damaging the hulls.

The Inaugural Routes of 1842



It was rumoured in England during the summer of 1842, that the Company was about to fail, despite a £240 000 p.a. subsidy from the British Government. In September of that year the North American and Madeira routes were cancelled. The following month a further 13 destinations were reported in 'The Bermuda Royal Gazette' as being dropped from the itinerary; amongst these was Greytown.

For the next five years, the conveyancing of the Greytown mails was once again in the hands of Admiralty vessels calling irregularly at Greytown, and the Captains of private vessels.

The new contract of September 1842, which excluded Greytown from the itinerary, came into effect on 1st October 1842, and included a major change in route. Grand Turk, Turks Islands, had been chosen initially for its geographic location, but had proved unsuitable in all but calm weather, with a resulting frequent delay in the mails. Arrangements were made with the Dutch to use Charlotte Amalie harbour, St. Thomas, as no other British possession had a suitable harbour. Over the next 40 years the facilities on St. Thomas were slowly improved by the RMSP Co..

Communications between Falmouth and London were never very good, being over two days by road, and Falmouth only continued to be used as a packet station because of tradition. Since the steamers left from and arrived at Southampton, it made sense to transfer packet operations there, as by this time Southampton was only two hours from London by rail. The Board of Admiralty agreed to the change in September 1843, and this drastically reduced travelling time to the packet station.

By November 1844 schooners on the Jamaica to Chagres route were once again calling in at Greytown. The following year the RMSP Co. purchased the steamer 'Reindeer' to replace this schooner, at the request of the Admiralty. During the years that followed, trade with the Gulf of Mexico became sufficiently important to warrant major route changes, which were subsequently introduced. These were explained to local postal officials by the Surveyor of the Post Office in the West Indies, Mr J. Kains, and came into effect with the steamer leaving Southampton on 2nd November 1847. Mr Kains may have visited James Green, as Greytown was included in the new itinerary.

to be continued

GUATEMALA'S MOST FORGED STAMP by Keith Dixon

During May of 1916 Guatemala issued a set of three provisional stamps (SG 152-4), to answer the need for a 6c, 12½c and 25c stamp required owing to the rise in postal rates.

The repercussions of World War 1 had been felt in Guatemala as inflation rose and its already weak currency began to suffer as a result. The stamps used for this provisional issue were the 1c of 1902 (SG 116) for the 6c and 12½c and the 2c of the same series (SG 117) for the 25c. The new values were overprinted in black by the Tipografia Nacional in Guatemala City. With the very weak currency situation prevailing at the time a full sheet of the originals containing 100 copies could be obtained for coppers, and so the sudden increase in face value by the addition of the surcharges was just too great a temptation for the forgers and fakers. Thus the stage was set for the most forged stamp issue of Guatemala this century has seen to date. Even stamps on cover correctly used do not indicate any form of authenticity, as many of the forgeries escaped detection in the mail, thus defrauding the postal authorities of their revenue.

To help detect the fakes and forgeries, I have attempted to set out the various differences between the genuine and forged surcharges of each issue in turn.

The 6c on 1c (fig 1) was surcharged only on the issue with the claret centre, so that any stamp with the violet centre is automatically bogus, as are any with the surcharge in red. Genuine errors are known, including inverted and double surcharges, as well as the inverted 'S' of 'CENTAVOS' (position 45) or the second 'S' of 'SEIS' (fig 2), which appears twice on the sheet (positions 23 and 36).

fig 1

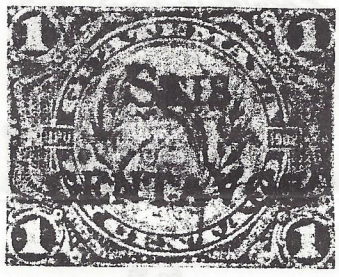


fig 2

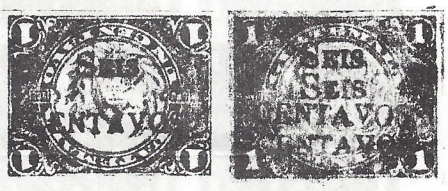


fig 3

The measurements of the genuine surcharge are 'SEIS', 8¼ x 3½mm; 'CENTAVOS', 20¼ x 2½mm; height 11¼mm; space between the two lines 5½mm. In my own collection I have violet centres, double and single surcharges with a height of only 10½mm, both normal and inverted, and inverted in red (fig 3).

The 12½c on 1c follows the pattern of the previous stamp in that genuine errors are known to exist. Double surcharges and the inverted surcharge are not too uncommon, together with the inverted 'S' in 'CENTAVOS' (fig 4) in position 45 in the sheet. The '13½' in place of '12½' in genuine form is a great rarity, only appearing in some sheets in position 97, and any such examples must be treated with a little suspicion. The most common forgery is shown (fig 5).

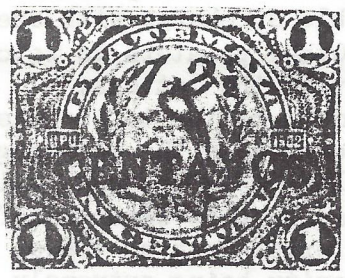


fig 4

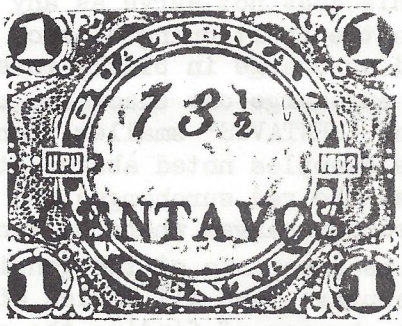


fig 5

Again stamps with the violet centre are bogus, as are any examples with a red surcharge. Inverted double surcharges fall into this category, as no genuine examples are known to exist. Measurements of the genuine surcharge serve as a guide to eliminate other doubtful examples, the correct measurements being as follows; overall height 10½mm; '12½', 7¾-8 x 3½mm; 'CENTAVOS', 20¼ x 2½mm with the space between the two, 4½mm.

Many of the fakes measure up to the genuine, and other pointers which help to differentiate between the two are the slanting surcharges, where the genuine are almost horizontal; the '2' of '½' with a flat bottom and coming below the line of the '12' (fig 6); the curved 'CENTAVOS' (fig 7) with the 'C' and the 'S' lower than the rest of the surcharge, and the '2' in '12½' broken on the top curve; the '½' of '12½' being 1-1½mm higher than the '12' (fig 8).

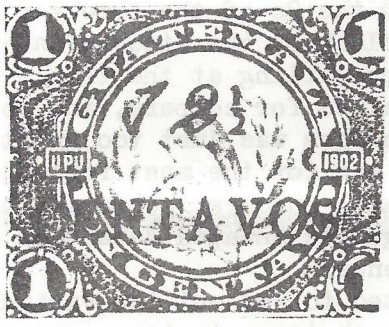


fig 6

fig 7

fig 8

All these examples I have in my collection in both black and red printings (fig 9).

fig 9

fig 10

fig 11

The 25c on 2c includes the inverted and double surcharge with the addition in position 45 of the inverted 'S'. An essay of this surcharge on the 1c is known (fig 10). Once again red surcharges must be treated as bogus, as no known examples have been genuinely recorded in this colour. The measurements of the original are once more a guide to distinguishing between the genuine and the forged examples on this particular stamp. The genuine measurements are overall height, 8¾mm; 'VEINTICINO', 18¾ x 1¾mm; 'CENTAVOS' 20½ x 2½mm; and the space between the two lines 4½mm (fig 11).

In the genuine examples the ink used for the surcharge is glossy black, with the lettering sharp and clean cut, whilst the forgeries tend to have a blurred appearance and a much duller ink. The genuine surcharge is often found with the letters and characters broken, but this does not serve as any form of guide against the forgeries, as there is no set pattern to the positioning of such examples. I have examples in my forgery collection of an inverted surcharge in black; inverted double surcharge with one black and one red; normal double surcharge one black and one red. Other pointers to watch out for are stamps with the 'V' of 'CENTAVOS' smaller than the rest of the letters.

Of all the examples noted above, it is a simple matter to isolate the obvious bogus issues, such as the red surcharges and violet centres in the surcharged 1 centavo stamp, and double inverted surcharges where no known examples of the genuine exist. Having disposed of these, the measurements of the genuine against suspect examples often serves to eliminate a further percentage, and all copies of the 13½ error must be viewed with the utmost suspicion, the chances of finding the genuine rarity being extremely remote.

I trust these notes will help to guide collectors of Guatemala to distinguish between the genuine issues and the fakes, which constitute this country's most forged stamps.

CAUSERIE

25. Richard Washburn replies to Leo Harris's enquiry about HONDURAS PEN-CANCELS. He says that on the first issue of Honduras these are more common than any of the other types of town markings or transportation markings that help prove genuine usage during the period of validity (1866-1876). Richard knows of one straight line pen-cancel used at Trujillo, written over the usual strip of three of Honduras No. 2 (the rose stamp). Later on, starting with the 1877 surcharges, and used for the 1878-1885 period were the seven thick parallel bars of such a length, that the cancellation appears circular 25mm diameter 2mm space between each bar - in black or blue ink. Then came the negative star and target cancellations found during the Seebeck era (1890-1893).

26. Answering Leo's enquiry about the HONDURAS BARS cancel, Richard continues that they were 'flat' hand cancellors all in one piece, a rubber stamp type with the word HONDURAS as an integral part of the rubber stamp. These are still being used in many post offices today in Honduras. The earliest known usage of this type cancel is on the 'Seebeck' Columbus issue in March of 1893. Almost all stamps cancelled during the 1890-1893 era were done with the negative star and the target cancel.

27. Richard also answers Leo's enquiry about the facsimile signatures of Santiago Herrera on SG 196-205 and 215-221. This was done during the revolution of 1924 when many stamps were stolen from the customs houses; supposedly this prevented the use of the stolen stamps. The signatures on SG 319-37 and 328-36, says Richard, are those applied by other Administrators of Customs, probably for the same reason (stolen stamps). It was done quite extensively again in July and August of 1958 and Richard draws attention to an article on the subject which he wrote in 'The Aero Philatelist Annals' Vol XVIII Nos. 3 & 4, January 1971.

32. Leo also asked about a railway coupon stamp with a 'D' overprint. He assumed this to be an error for 'B' (see illustration in our No. 3 issue). Kilian Nathan suggests that it is more likely that the 'D' stands for 'DESTACE', a cattle-slaughtering tax, for which fiscal stamps were issued.

30. Kilian also comments that Leo Malz seems to have found a new variety with his small '1' in '15' official barred out as on Nicaragua SG 333, also illustrated in our last edition.

FROM ROLANDO KUEHN, M.D. by Kilian Nathan

On a 2 centavos postal stationery card with Columbus-sights-the-New-World motif, posted November 4th 1892, bearing New Orleans transit c.d.s. of 12th November, and New York P.O.N.Y. arrival c.d.s. 14th November, to the Hamilton Bank Note Co., New York City, USA.

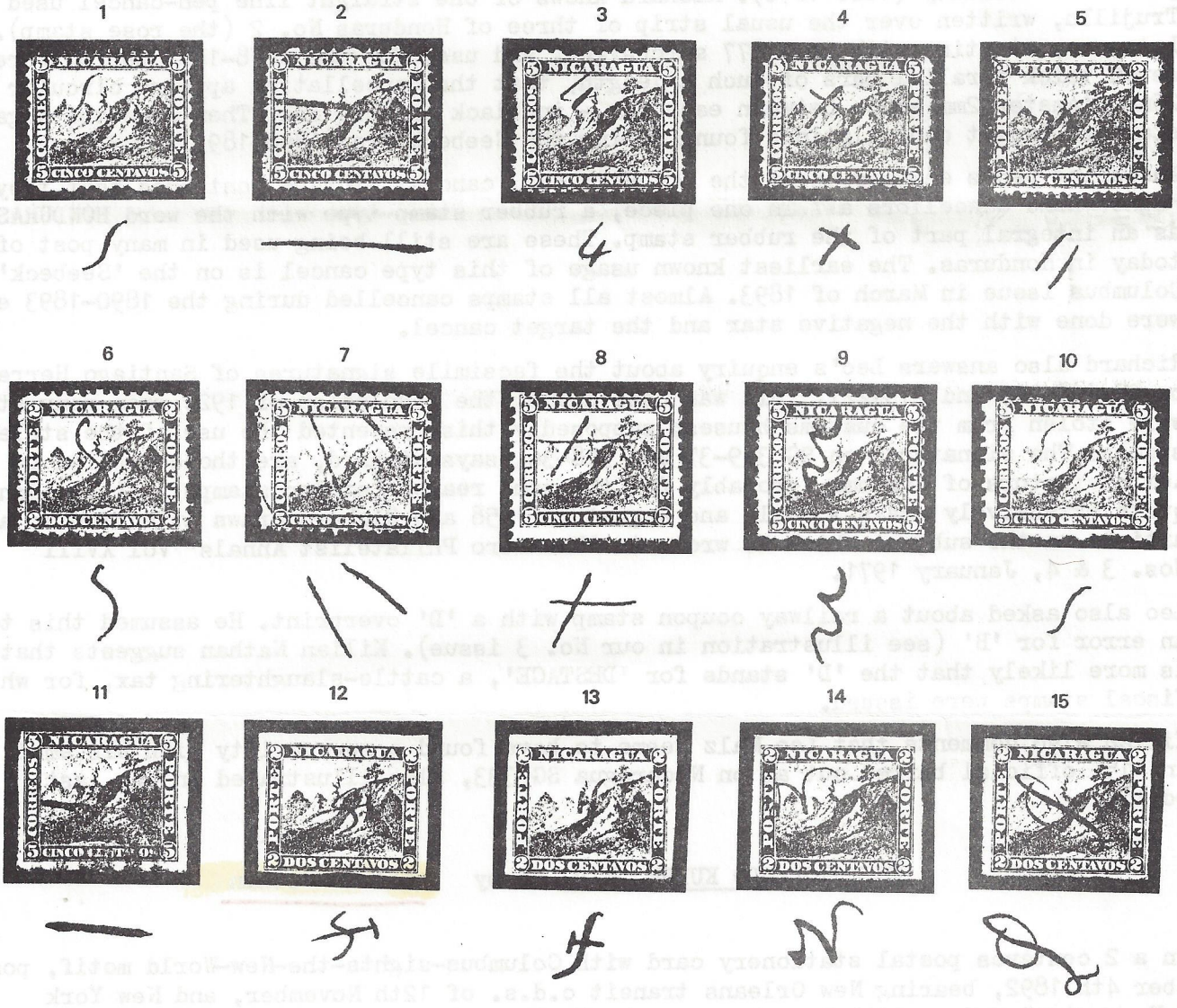
Headed "OFFICE OF HEALTH OFFICER OF MOSQUITO GOVERNMENT/ROLANDO KUEHN, M.D./PORT SURGEON/ Bluefilds, M.R., Nic.....1892", the text reads;-

> "Gentlemen - Please mail me a sample copy of your publication. I am making Central American and Nicaraguan stamps a speciality. Send me all information about postage stamps; as I am new at the business. I am proprietor of the 'Sentinel', the only American paper in Central America. Subscribe to the 'Sentinel' if you wish to be posted about Mosquito, its resources, Mineral and Agricultural wealth. I will insert advertisements and take postage stamps in payment. I will soon publish a 5000 edition Hand-book and Directory of Mosquito. Sample copy of the 'Sentinel' will be sent on application. I want all catalogues and publications referring to Numismatics and Philatelic.
>
> Respectfully, ROLANDO KUEHN, M.D."

(Various Corn Island Covers are addressed to Dr Kuehn, as are various bisect covers, and in the same hand covers to such presumably fictitious addresses as P. Casanova, Greytown, Nic. - Editor).

NEW CAUSERIE

34. D.N.Kilner asks about pen cancels on the early stamps of Nicaragua. He sends us photographs of some, and asks other members with similar material to respond, so that he may try to make some sense out of them.



COSTA RICA: POSTAL STATIONERY by George Richardson

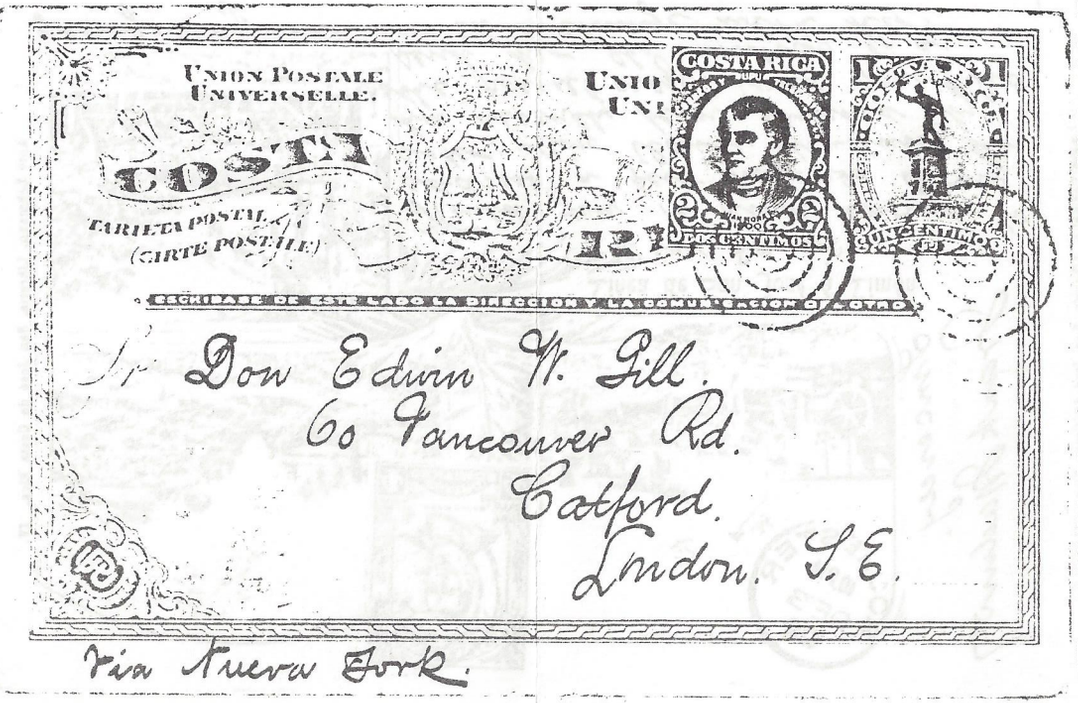
George Richardson follows up N.F.Brewin's article by sending photostats of four items in his own collection.

1. Similar to the item illustrated by N.F.Brewin, this also goes to G.B., with the same stamps and cancel, but the reverse shows two views of Puerto Limon and the setting is different, showing MEMORIAS DE COSTA RICA at top left etc.. There is no trace of a printed postal stationery stamp on the card.

2-4. These are later, ranging from 15th November 1904 to 16th March 1905. The obverse has no stamp or printed place for it; indeed all three have the stamp(s) on the picture side. These have the same imprint as (1) but inverted, with slight variations, especially in the Roman numerals which follow. No.3 does not show MEMORIAS DE COSTA RICA. The inscription on the obverse of these cards suggests some official standing. The reverse of No.4 is almost identical with that in the Brewin article, differing only in that the inscription faces inwards instead of out.

If the postage rates are correct, the postal rates are of interest, viz.

1. To London, 1902 - 3 centavos
2. To Rochester, Kent, 1904. - 4 centavos
3. as for No.2
4. To Paris, 1905. - 2 centavos, BUT NOTE CACHET AND ENDORSEMENT ON OBVERSE.


UNION POSTALE UNIVERSELLE.
COSTA RICA
TARJETA POSTAL
(CARTE POSTALE)
ESCRIBASE DE ESTE LADO LA DIRECCION Y LA COMUNICACION AL OTRO.

Via New Orleans.

Costa Rica

Union postale Universelle. — Unión postal Universal.

TARJETA POSTAL. (CARTE POSTALE.)

Escribase de este lado la Dirección y la Comunicación del otro.

LIMON 15 NOV 1904 COSTA RICA

Mr. Edwin Gill.

C/o Messrs. Watson & Gill.

Rochester. Kent.

England.

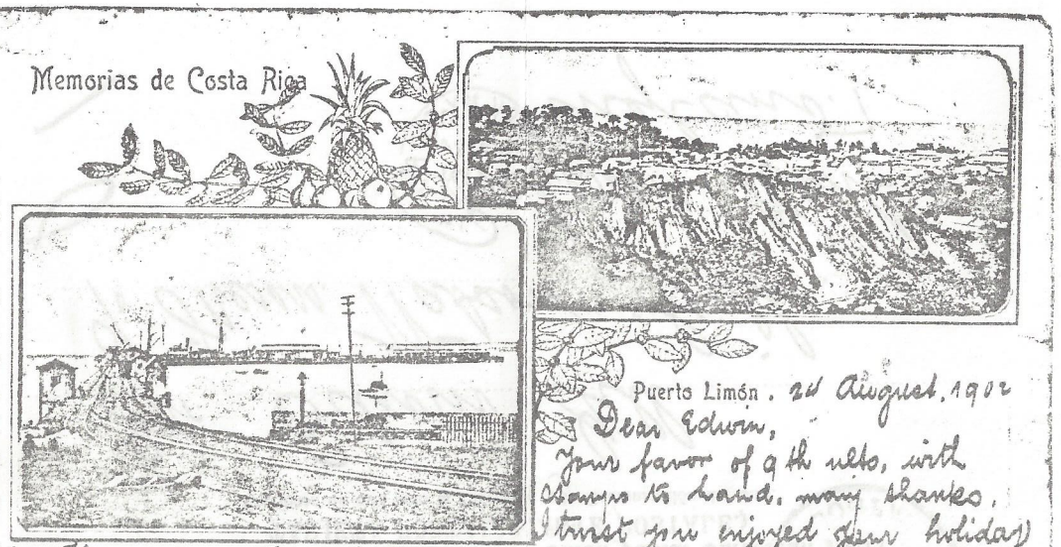
To Don Edwin W. Gill.
60 Vancouver Rd.
Catford.
London. S.E.

Via Nueva York.

card 1

card 2

-6-



Puerto Limón. 2d August. 1902

Dear Edwin,

Your favor of 9th ults. with stamps to hand. many thanks. I trust you enjoyed your holiday in Heme Bay. Two of our volcanoes are in eruption, but as a rule they are so every year at this time, so it does not scare us. The above photos are, a general view of Limon, & a view of the wharf. With best regards. I remain, Yours sincerely Frank Maduro.

Memorias de Costa Rica

11/11/04

Limon.

Dear Edwin,

Quite an age that I have not heard from you, & I am almost positive that I wrote you last. Please write me soon & let me know how you are getting on. I am now a partner in my father's business, the firm is Maduro & Sons.

Bad regards.
Yrs sincerely
Frank Maduro

Via New Orleans.

Costa Rica

Union postale Universelle. - Unión postal Universal.

TARJETA POSTAL. (CARTE POSTALE.)

Escríbase de este lado la Dirección y la Comunicación del otro.

13 NOV 1905

Mr. Edwin Gill

% Messrs. Watson & Gill.

Rochester. Kent.

England.

NOV 24 1905 NEW YORK, N.Y. FOR

card 3

Antº Lehmann, Librería, San José de Costa Rica. 17.

DEC 4 10PM 1905 ROCHESTER

Línea de San José á Limón

Dear Edwin,

Francey. Frank Maduro.

Dear Edwin,

Would you be kind enough to address a few postals to my sister. Miss Elaine Maduro, she has recently been touched by the postal craze. Could you also send her the address of a young lady who would exchange with her.

Costa Rica

Union postale Universelle. - Unión postal Universal.

TARJETA POSTAL. (CARTE POSTALE.)

Escríbase de este lado la Dirección y la Comunicación del otro.

Imprimés
affranchissement
au tarif

Madame Beaupré

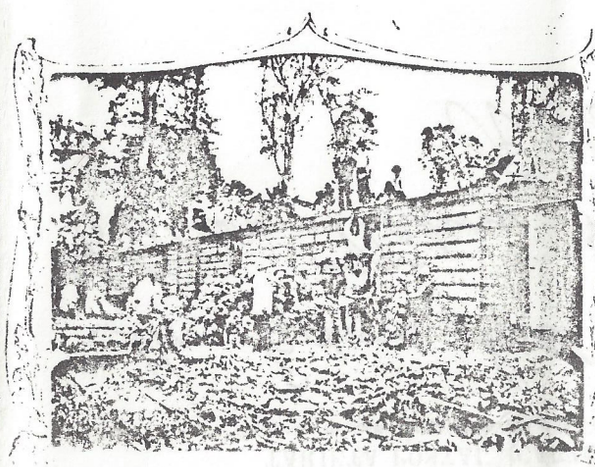
7 Rue de Calais

MAR 16 1906

Paris

France

card 4



Antº Lehmann, Librería, San José de Costa Rica. XI.

Memorias de Costa Rica